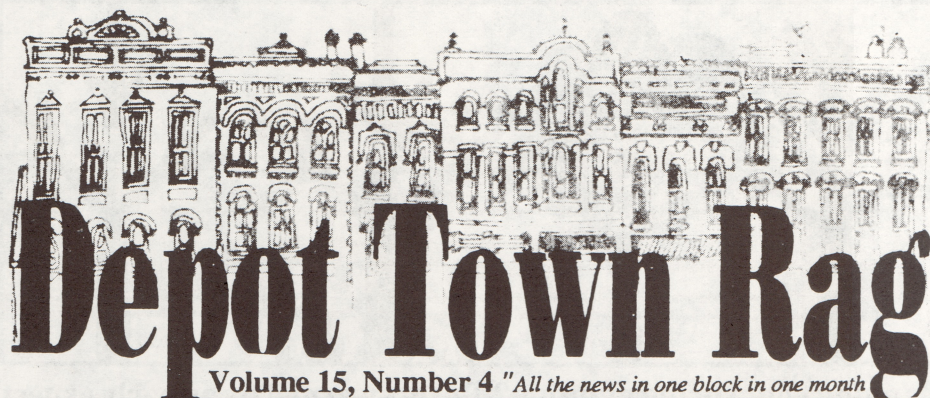




Depot Town Rag

Volume 15, Number 4 "All the news in one block in one month"

100% FREE
Rag content
April 1992

- Gardens panned
 - Proprietariness pays
 - Yet another tower
 - Demitrius' progeny
 - Classic cars convene
- and other strictly local stuff. . .

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Dateline: Depot Town

Presidential candidate, Pat Buchanan, stopped in Depot Town in March to have his picture taken alongside some of Jack Miller's classic Hudson motorcars. No one would dare mistake those beauties for a Mercedes Benz.

Aubree's Saloon will see a new addition this summer in the form of a 'roof garden' at the rear of their venerable address. This should become a train-watcher's paradise, according to architect, Lis Knibbe.

May's first weekend will enjoy the expanded return of the Ypsi Street Rods' Kick-Off Party and Registration down in the old railroad district. Many businesses plan to stay open later that Friday night.

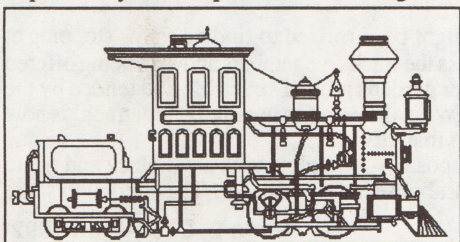
The 1992 Winter Blues & Jazz Series saw only one event in the 'series' — the highly successful March 21 event as a fund-raiser for more events — and then cut back to the usual annual round of June's Frog Island and August's Heritage Jazz Competition.

New owner of the Follett House, Scott Classen, is preparing for a new tenant at # 19. Watch for those newspapers to come off the windows and reveal a Cappuccino coffee house.

J & R Trading Post has condensed their many antique concessionaires into the two shops to the west and continues their vital and refreshing display of unique collectibles and consumables.

Sidetrack folks have repaired the crack in their east wall which has been growing since The Great Train Wreck of 1939 and will soon open a window in that wall -- to afford an even better view of the passing trains.

Recycling volunteers found a flyer announcing a model railroad show to be held in the MCRR depot. No year was printed on it, though.



A tradition of doing "art to art" down by the river



Cutting a matt to size, Paul Feters, has operated River Artworks in Depot Town since 1978

River Artworks serves area 12 years

Depot Town's Paul Feters is probably one of the few people we'll ever meet who accomplished his life's objectives with such direct purpose and startling clarity. When he was an English major at Eastern Michigan University, Paul often amazed his artistic compatriots when they expounded on high hopes of their future works being shown at the world's leading galleries and museums. "You do that," Paul would intone, "and I'll matt and frame them for you."

With such an academic background, you can be sure that "matting" and "framing" are spelled correctly on his shop's bright blue awning.

From that early beginning Paul's goal was to "do art to art." Since those days, that goal has become his company's motto.

Graduating from EMU in 1970, Paul went to to write for *The Northville Record* where he developed an interest in news photography, as well. He then went to Boston to follow that interest for the next two and a half years.

When he joined the crowd at Denny McCauley's Depot Town General Store in 1978, Paul developed one of the many creative cooperative corners of that unique establishment and hung out his shingle as "River Artworks." Other subdivisions of the business included items from clothing to groceries. Since that time, the other installments have expanded into separate businesses or diminished altogether and Paul has moved from #50 East Cross to the current location — next door — at #48 East Cross. But his darkroom is still underneath #50.

Five months ago Ruth Satchwell joined Paul to keep up with the demand for their excellent presentation of art work.

Paul is married to Sharon VanWright and is a past president of the Depot Town Association. In fact, Paul was the first merchant president of the Association. Since that time, DTA has created a new focus on the interest and need of the district's business priorities.

Paul Feters is also chair of the Depot Town Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and has overseen many of their recent successful projects in the neighborhood. This year's priorities are being formulated right now -- and he encourages all interested neighbors to make their wishes known to him at the shop as soon as possible.

Paul's involvement in his community has created a handsome model for other entrepreneurs: Not content to merely sweep off the sidewalk, roll up the awning and wait for the clientele to line up at the cash register, his style has been to take an active part in the formulation of the style and content of the entire neighborhood. Proprietariness pays off again!

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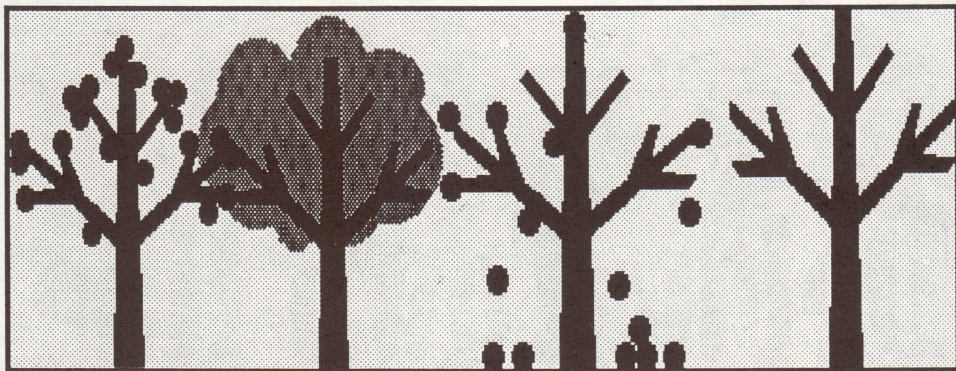
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Planning your spring planting? Be forewarned by an early expert MCRR depot gardens at Ypsilanti panned in 1913

Most local preservationists are very much aware of the esteem with which early Ypsilantians held those ornate gardens at the depot. A popular picture of the time shows a floral display of a steam passenger train going over a trestle at Niagara Falls — with floral smoke coming from the stack of the steam engine, yet! Proud as we locals must have been of our famed gardens at the depot, America's leading landscape architects took a dim view of the garish and unnatural display. In their 1913 proposal to the City of Ypsilanti, the Olmsted brothers, of Brookline, Mass., recommended several changes for the City's railroad district. Some of their other projects included New York's Central Park, Ashville's Biltmore Gardens, and Detroit's Belle Isle. Here's what they had to say about Ypsilanti's . . . **Railway Station and Yards** [recommendation #38]:

"The somewhat remarkable efforts of the Michigan Central to make the station grounds attractive should encourage the City to cooperate with and supplement these efforts, not only by preserving and

improving the outlook over the river but by securing more radical and essential improvements in connection with the station itself. In the first place, the present grade crossings of the

tracks at Cross Street and in a less degree at Forest Avenue are serious evils for the elimination of which the City and the railroad should adopt definite plans at once in order that no further obstacles may be placed in the way of improvement, even though such plans cannot be carried out for many years. If the station were to be moved to the westerly side of the tracks whence most of the business comes, the evil of the Cross Street grade crossing could be materially reduced, as a large share of the travel across the tracks would be eliminated.

"Sooner or later the City will require greater facilities for handling freight than can be provided in the present freight house and adjacent sidings. The arrangements for loading and unloading live stock

ought to be shifted, as a matter of railroad convenience, to the opposite side of the tracks, and placed in a somewhat less conspicuous position. These facts point to the advisability of shifting the whole

freight business to the south of Cross Street where the railroad already has some land, and where a sidetrack now branches off to the Water Works, and where

several factories are already established. Such a change in connection with shifting the passenger station to the westerly side of the tracks and parking the river valley would give the entrance to Ypsilanti a breadth and liberality of treatment far more attractive than is possible under present conditions. In the present situation much has been attempted and it is perhaps a fair criticism to say that in the effort to make the best of a limited space

the railroad has already gone to the extreme in the way of gardenesque elaboration, and that a simpler, less labored and more easily maintained treatment of the grounds would be more appropriate and more beautiful."

"... a breadth and liberality
of treatment far more
attractive than is possible
under present conditions"

"... already gone to the
extreme in the way of
gardenesque elaboration. . ."

Seventy-nine years later the Olmsted brothers might be surprised to find no trains stopping at a much reduced depot which was never moved across the tracks, vegetables and jazz being offered in the misplaced freight house, and the gaudy flower gardens moved streetside and tended by the local inhabitants of the former railroad tenements. What they saw as unsightly 'sidetrack' is now commemorated in the name of a popular saloon in that city.

A full copy of the 93-page Olmsted Brothers' proposal — complete with clear black and white photos of city flora in 1913 — is on file at The Old Caboose in Depot Town. The editor will share it upon request.

Proprietariness pays off down here; other communities should try it

Depot Towners are often puzzled when someone (too often from Ann Arbor or some other nearly four-times-bigger metropoli) makes an off-hand reference about our holding some quasi-honorary title because of our activity here in old Ypsilanti. Those phony titles are real to some, but pure fantasy to the raconteur in question.

"Oh, he's the 'Mayor of Depot Town'," they'll quip as they turn on a smug countenance usually reserved for their face when touring a Norman Rockwell retrospective gallery show. Jonesy gets it all the time, but so do many of the rest of our neighbors. When he and they are called 'mayor,' it's as if the caller thinks it's terribly unique for someone to be known by so many people and not been elected to the position.

Or, "I'd like you to meet my friend, X. She's known as The Mother of Historic Preservation..." or some such insipid crack denoting civic consciousness as if it were both quaint and archaic. Their off-handed-intro may indicate a desire to be known for something, themselves, but it's hard to be known for something if you don't DO something.

Buckminster Fuller once said, "I think I am a verb," and Depot Town seems to have such a great number of active verbs, than most

places. Maybe that's why they think we're strange. They're nouns. We're verbs.

After more than a decade of promoting jazz in the district, one of our neighbors is too often called "Ma Jazz," as if she could never, ever hope to get rid of the title. Maybe it signifies that no one else wants the job — or maybe that the clichéd user just isn't ready to take such a responsibility themselves.

Our editor was even labelled the "Pope of Depot Town" in another paper after a particularly volatile election. That was back in the days when the local dailies figured Depot Town had a lot more votes than it really did.

All we really have down here is a plethora of OPINIONS and maybe that's what confuses the rest of the world about us.

We're all very proprietary and ACT LIKE WE OWN THE PLACE. Such acting, however, seems to just bamboozle a lot of citizens from less involved communities.

After visiting other places, it seems that what just about every neighborhood in America needs is more people acting like they own the place. Such 'ownership' breeds waving and smiling — great deterrents to crime, traffic accidents, drug dealing and general disconnectedness. It's a neighborhood ethic for anyone who want to be 'the mayor.'

"He's the 'mayor' of Depot Town"

Another shameless self promotion:

Changes? What's new?

Some wag has said, "Everybody likes progress; it's the changes they don't like."

The most conservative person we know often says, "After I get accustomed to the daylight, I don't even like it getting dark. I just don't like change."

Such reactionaries must be terribly uncomfortable down here in Depot Town. These folks not only look forward to the coming of Spring — and it's attendant changes — but they revel in change just for the sake of change, sometimes.

Sure, it may be easier to tolerate such a changing environment in a community where so many things stay constant: historic Italianate commercial buildings won't change, according to the Ypsilanti Historic District Ordinance; the Huron River just keeps rolling on by, due to the controlling dams up and down stream from Depot Town; the trains continue their rush from Detroit to Chicago and back. But, in between the points of that changeless triad, Depot Town keeps changing.

Although much of our clientele stays the same, there is a constant turn over of new folks who've 'discovered' Depot Town. EMU and UM students happen upon us and find a world they'd thought disappeared. Antique shoppers, too, discover this hidden treasure trove of things they feared had been thrown away or forgotten. Jazz musicians find a venue for performing some of the hottest licks to a most appreciative audience. Each of these publics bring Depot Town exciting renewals.

Every month the 'regulars' pick up *The Rag* to see what's new in old Depot Town — and the contrast of new and old continues to titillate their tastes.

Not only do new commercial enterprises join our two streets of creativity, but they keep changing the copy in their monthly display ads in *The Depot Town Rag*. Many of our loyal sponsors turn over their ad copy with great regularity to assess the actual effect of that tiny promotion on the block. They'll offer a coupon or a special and watch for the reaction among their clientele. It's a great technique for measuring their effect upon the rest of the world.

And, as if The New Technology hadn't yet arrived in the Old Commercial District, they do it all without the aid of fax machines, cellular phones or other modes of telecommunication. They simply write down their copy and stick it in the editor's street-side mailbox at 25 1/2 East Cross by the third Thursday of the month.

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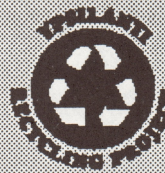
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April 18, 10:00am

For more info Please Call 482-4095

Page 3 DTA, April 1992

Depot Town Association, Inc., 19 March 1992

Vice President Dave Blackmer conducted the meeting. Gwen Blackmer acted as secretary.

Minutes of February read and approved.

Blues Fest update: Ticket sales for the March concert have been slow. Plans continue for the execution of the original March 21 date with Sugar Blue and Big Dave & The Ultrasonics. Many volunteers are on hand to help with this fundraiser for the August Heritage Jazz Competition. The April concert in the series has been scratched.

The Ark's final payment for the Frog Island concept is expected soon.

Treasury: Insurance for the Blues Fest will cost \$1100. Total balance is under \$1300.

The Ypsi Street Rods Club has voted not to park in the street on first weekend in May, even though the City has agreed to close the street to traffic. An Old Time Fire Engine Muster is still possible for the Street Rods' kick-off. Should we have our own Old Car Festival?

Greek Week will not expand to Depot Town, but will be confined to the EMU Campus.

Business Manager search? No report.



DTA: Firmly rooted in the past - with a clear view forward!

Income is still due from the Victorian Holiday Santa's Parade and Street Dance. DTA will send bills again.

Cow Chips Contest discussion was delayed to a later date. Should DTA have a booth at the Ann Arbor Street Art Fair? More information to follow.

Rag Report: Several businesses who requested placement in The Depot Town Rag have still not responded with the paid sponsorship. A gentle reminder will be sent requesting payment and their ad will be continued through April.

Downtown Development (DDA) plans have risen to \$30,250 for this year. Due to late payments to the City from Radisson Resort, such projects continue on hold. Items may be removed from the list and placed with other budget items. The landscaping plan has been reduced from \$7500 to \$5000, cost for Business Manager has been removed completely. Total now stands at around \$15,000. Some of the existing plans may still be accomplished through other City budget items.



Strictly local stuff:

April 1992

Depot Towners are invited to participate in any or all of the following activities for the good of this old commercial district:

Depot Town Association

7:30 p.m. Thursday, 15th

The Old Caboose

Depot Town

Antique Engine Club 22th

7:30 pm, Thursday

Freighthouse Coffeeshop

1991-1992 DTA officers

President	A. William French	483-1870
Vice president	Dave Blackmer	485-7546
Secretary	Sandee French	483-1870
Treasurer	Bettie Dodd	482-6371

Rental properties in Depot Town

Retail space available at 11 East Cross.
Offstreet parking. 600-1350 sq. ft.
Inquire at Teachers Shop,
15 East Cross or call 483-3464.

Contact DepotTown Clearing House at 482-1279 for a great selection of local rental opportunities.

THE DEPOT TOWN RAG

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.

Tom Dodd, editor

The Depot Town Association, Inc.

A. William French, president
c/o The Old Caboose
400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

This month's Shoppers' Survey:

Mary G. Conley • Marilyn E. Grady
won FREE dinners for two at either
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Special DTA membership offer
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Please include me among the members of

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City _____ State _____ ZIP _____



I'm available to help with Association projects. Call me at _____

Annual dues:

- o \$25 Regular Member (Property or business owner)
- o \$10 Associate Member (Interested in and supportive)
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- o Please place my name on the monthly mailing list of *The Depot Town Rag*
- o Don't mail *The Rag*. I'll pick it up in the neighborhood.

\$ Clip and send check to "Depot Town Association"

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56 E. CROSS



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'Most every crossing had its tower



Three lovely ladies stand on the cables and weights which operated the crossing gate as their doll carriage sits at left. The house in back still stands on Forest Avenue.



A young couple poses with their new baby. The mother looks a lot like the woman at the top right in the other photo. Maybe it wasn't a doll carriage, after all!

Who are these people and what are they doing on our tower?

Forest Ave's didn't look like our new tower, either

The train gates were great places to have your picture taken, as these family album photos show. Lynn Tabor's collection shows two different groups posing at the board-and-batten tower which is thought to be the one which stood at the tracks at Forest Avenue at the north end of Depot Town.

Anyone recognize these folks? Are they still around? The photos are thought to have been taken in the 1920's. Maybe the baby in the right hand photo is one of us, today!?

Even if our readers don't know the true identity of the folks pictured herein, all are encouraged to make up stories about them and send them to the editor. Let the readers decide.

1992's Signal Tower replication at the corner of East Cross and North River still seems to be a good place to have your picture taken. Nearly every weekend another flock of tourists stops by to shop for antiques and get a snapshot at the still-unfished tower. Imagine the crowd that will form once the final trim is in place and the paint is applied. Maybe they're just warming up those photos in black and white -- getting ready for the real thing next month?

Coffee House at the Follett House

Scott Klaassen, new owner of the famed Follett House, and his partner, Tom Steele, will open Depot Town's first coffee house at 21 East Cross at the end of this month. Although the classy enterprise has no name at this time, it may follow the success of Ann Arbor's Espresso Royale with exotic coffees, fancy deserts such as *tarfus* — an Italian ice cream ball, chocolates, cakes and such.

Sidewalk observers have already noted the green-painted tin ceiling above the newspaper-covered front windows. Other interior changes will include a new restroom.

The new shop will feature a guitarist several nights a week to entertain guests.

Current Depot Towners may remember the Mayflower Storage billboard on the west facade which was replaced by a spate of 'rainbow' enterprises in the 1970's, but none can remember the days when Phineas T. Barnum and Buffalo Bill brought their expositions to its upper floors.

The bay at #21 housed the old hotel's lobby and the main dining room for guests. The elevator which was removed in 1980 was a later addition created for the storage of furniture on the building's upper levels. Earlier hotel guests used a grand staircase, a small part of which is still visible on the third floor -- one building to the east. Division of properties years ago put two bays on a separate deed, no longer part of the original five-bay hotel.

A building of nearly equal size once stood behind the present property across the alley in what is now the Market Plaza.

The fourth floor at Follett's east end not connected by either elevator nor staircase today. The new owner has updating plans for this space, as well.

Klaassen's coffee house is his first entry to the Depot Town ambiance. More will follow.

**Ypsilanti's
Farmers' Market**
Open all year 'round
Wednesdays & Saturdays
in the Freighthouse
down in Depot Town

Support the merchants
DEPOT TOWN
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Demitrius' progeny proliferate

Just as you can find a fine Greek restaurant in nearly every town in America, so can you find a Greek founder or namesake in nearly every mid-western historical museum. If they dig in enough places, travellers to most locals towns will be surprised at the proclivity of those towns being discovered by Greeks, not Italians. Sorry; Demetrius Columbus is almost too much to grasp, even in this quintessential quasi-centennial year. In fact, most of those Greek namesakes were named Demetrius Something-or-other.

Ypsilanti, Michigan, as most loyal *Rag* readers are very well aware, was named for half of the famous Greek General Brothers, Demetrius. But most locals are not aware of Demi's cousins.

Demitrius Minneapolis was part Native American and settled further into the mid-west. As far as historians have been able to check, Minnie was no relation to Indian-Apolis; they came from different tribes, entirely.

Demitrius Detroit, a Frenchman with Greek connections, was known for being incredibly conservative and, hence, known among his contemporaries as Demetrius The Straight. Detroit's followers trusted him with their life savings, -which did not include recycling.

Demitrius South Bend, was another mid-westerner far from the shores of the Aegean. Many believe he was a chiropractor, but others claimed he "rubbed them the wrong way." Still, others feel that S. Bend may have merely been an early road sign in the area and may have not been a Greek person at all.

Farther south was the settlement of Demetrius Ft. Lauderdale. A well-known military man, Lauderdale created impressive fortifications made entirely of beach sand.

Most people are aware of Greek-French and Greek-Native American liasons, but Greek-Polish is especially unique. And their food is superb. Just drive down Joseph Campeau to Demetrius Hamtramck's hometown and place your order for eggplant pierogies. You'll join the ranks of the true believers and loyal Demitrians.

Next month: What happened to Demetrius' brother and why didn't he get such good press?

DTA, page 5, April 1992

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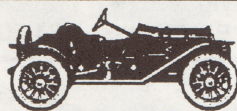


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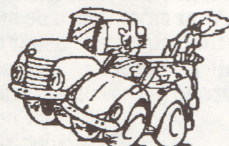
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A Depot Town SAMPLER

Cruisin' again



Hundreds of the most outrageous automobiles ever built and restored will descend upon the district the first weekend in May and — this time — we'll be ready for them.

When the Ypsi Street Rods Association talked with locals about their 1991 show, they (and we) expected about twenty-five people to come out back to the Freighthouse to register for their show which would run the next two days out at the Township's Ford Lake Park. No one expected to see nearly 500 glossy and glamorous vehicles show up that Friday night — but they certainly did.

Parking quickly plugged the spaces at the Freighthouse, then overflowed into the Frog Island lot and Recycling Site and bulged out onto Cross and River Streets. Just as quickly, the Market Plaza filled up with angle-parked displays that even Detroit's Cobo Center could not have equalled. The rest of the evening consisted of car owners and car 'appreciators' strolling and admiring.

All that is changed for this year. The Big Event will still be out in the Township, but the Kick-Off Party and Registration will take place in Depot Town — with full cooperation from the City of Ypsilanti and Depot Towners.

Businesses are urged to stay open "just as long as they can stand it" that night, and window displays featuring "street rods" and related paraphernalia will certainly draw many appreciative car buffs.

Somehow, Depot Town seems to create the perfect stage for such nostalgic conventions. And those nice folks from the Ypsi Street Rods club encourage everyone else — car crazies or not! — to dress up in their Fifties grease and come on down to Depot Town . . .
... Friday, May 1, 1992!

Page 6 DTA, March 1992

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**Olde Towne
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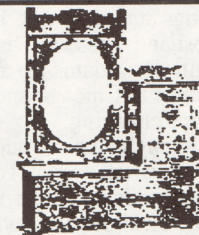
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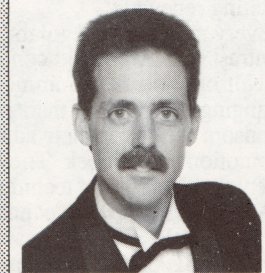
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